



# Gay Mine Site – 2020 Update



Work is progressing at the Gay Mine site this year. Reclamation projects to remove mining equipment and debris, improve public safety and protect important habitat, will be completed. And, soil samples from across the former phosphate mine will be collected and analyzed for contaminants.

## Reclamation Projects

The Bureau of Land Management and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes have agreed on plans for three reclamation projects. The projects will be completed by contractors working for FMC Corporation and the J.R. Simplot Company.

### Headquarters Cleanup

Contractors will remove the “tipple” (the old ore loading facility) and other buildings in the Headquarters area of the former mine, along with old power poles and general debris. Since mining operations ended in the early 1990s, the buildings and equipment have deteriorated to the point where they are no longer structurally sound. Tribal members will have the option of removing some of the material for reuse, the remaining structures will be demolished. Demolished building debris will be hauled offsite for disposal. The soil will be regraded and seeded with an approved blend of grasses and broadleaf flowering plants.

### K Pit Pond Fencing

The K Pit is in the North Limb area of the former mine, north of Headquarters. A pond east of the K Pit is fed by a natural spring that was diverted away from the pit during mining. The pond is heavily used by cattle, which causes high levels of nutrients in the pond and destruction of vegetation around the pond. Fencing to exclude cattle will improve water quality in the pond and allow native vegetation around the pond to recover, supporting use of the pond by salamanders, birds, and other wildlife. To ensure cattle still have access to water, this project will include installing a water trough and piping to convey fresh spring water to the trough, which will overflow back into the pond for wildlife use.

### W Pit Gate

The W Pit is a deep pit in the East Limb. The steep road down to the pit, a former mine haul road, is no longer maintained and is unsuitable for regular vehicle traffic. The Tribes have requested that a gate be installed across the road to prevent site visitors from driving down the road. The road will still provide access to the pit for environmental sampling.

## Soil Sampling Program

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, FMC Corporation, and the J.R. Simplot Company have agreed on a plan to sample soil from disturbed areas of the mine that have not been previously sampled. This ambitious effort will help us understand the contaminant concentrations across more than 2,600 acres. Soil sampling will target four soil types: overburden materials excavated during mining; mill shale piles containing low-grade phosphate ore; haul roads; and other areas including the bottom and side walls, where accessible, of open pits.

Sampling is underway and will wrap up in 2021. This summer and fall, about 20 percent of the total target area will be sampled. The results will be studied carefully over this winter, allowing adjustments to be made to the sampling plan, if needed, before the remaining areas are sampled in 2021.

The program will determine the concentrations in soil of 21 metals including arsenic, lead, mercury, and selenium; and 10 radionuclides including uranium, thorium, and radium. Selenium is the primary contaminant of concern because it can build up in plants and sicken or kill cows and other animals that eat the plants. Surface samples (zero to three inches deep) will be analyzed separately from subsurface samples (three to 12 inches deep).

Golder Associates, a contractor hired by the companies, is collecting the soil samples. Crews are using a backhoe to dig small holes. After the samples are collected, the holes are filled back in. Hand tools will be used in areas where access is limited. EPA and its contractor, Jacobs Engineering, are overseeing the work.

The soil sampling program will provide information about the location and extent of soil contamination across the site. EPA anticipates that additional information, including soil sampling on a finer scale, will be needed to support final cleanup decisions at the site.

## Site Background

J.R. Simplot Company and FMC Corporation mined phosphate ore at the Gay Mine from 1946 to 1993.

While the companies conducted previous reclamation at the mine, there remain waste rock dumps, ore stockpiles, and open pits across the site. The Bureau of Land Management is overseeing current mine reclamation activities. EPA is overseeing a Remedial Investigation / Feasibility Study of the site under the federal Superfund program.

The investigation will determine whether contamination from the mine threatens people or the environment. If problem areas are found, cleanup options for those areas will be evaluated in the feasibility study. Both agencies are working closely with the Tribes, as the former mine is located wholly within the boundaries of the Fort Hall Reservation.

*As we continue to adjust to the evolving COVID-19 situation, EPA is taking the necessary steps to ensure that decisions about ongoing cleanup activities at Superfund sites are made with the health and safety of communities, EPA staff, state and tribal partners, and contractors as the priority.*

*Therefore, decisions about continuing on-site activities will be made on a case-by-case basis. We are working closely with our local, state and tribal partners to evaluate options for continuing site work or securing sites, especially in areas where local health declarations are in effect due to COVID-19.*

## Community Involvement

EPA encourages community members to ask questions and report any concerns about this site.

The sampling plan is available on EPA's web site: [www.epa.gov/superfund/gay-mine](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/gay-mine). Questions or requests for site information can be submitted to:

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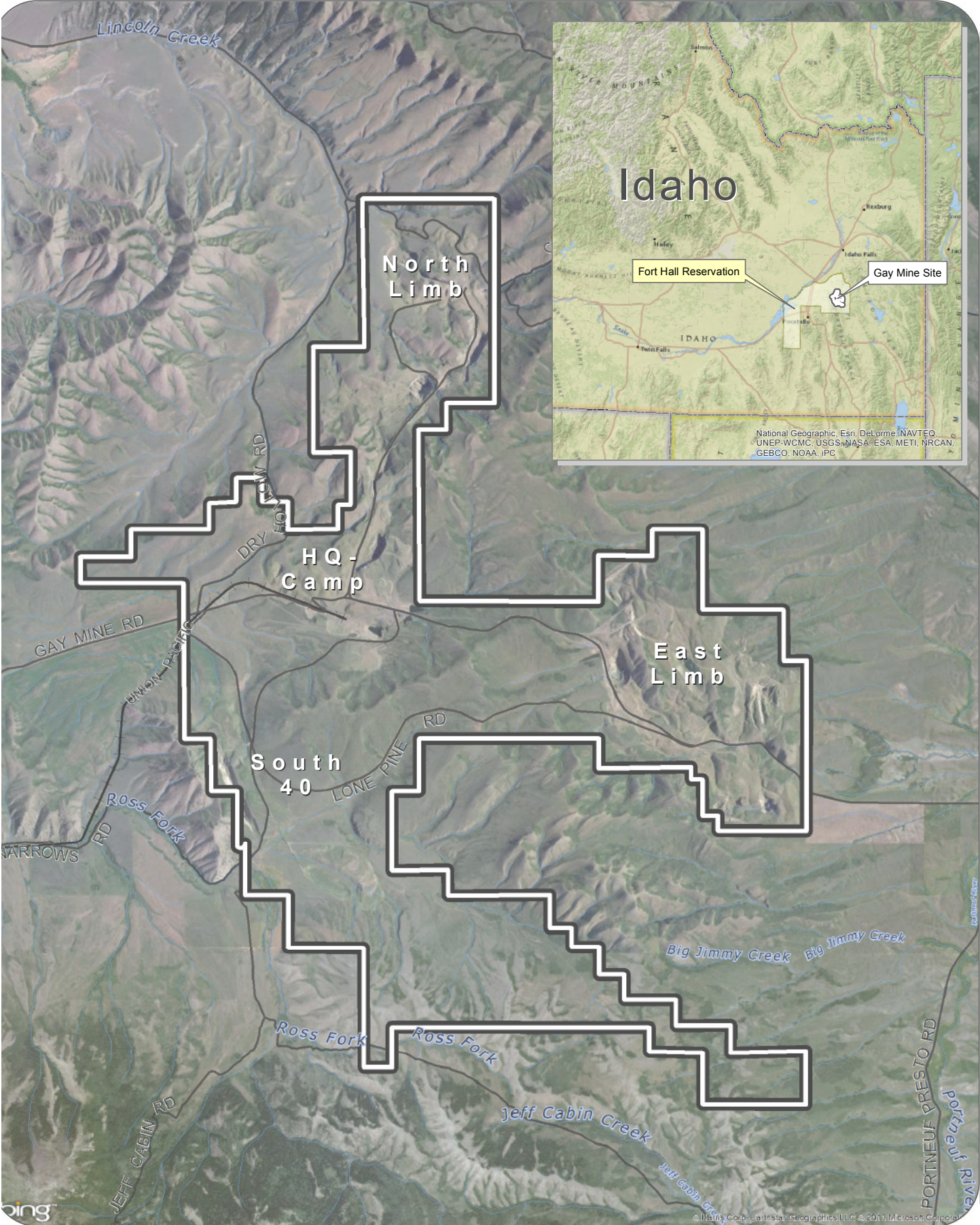
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For information on **employment** at the Gay Mine, please contact the TERO office 208-478-3848.

*If you need materials in an alternative format, please contact Kay Morrison at 800-424-4372, ext. 8321.*

 *TDD or TTY users, please call 800-877-8339 and give the operator Kay Morrison's phone number: 206-553-8321*





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# Gay Mine Study Site



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TS 8/16/13 EPA Region 10





## ***Gay Mine Site – 2020 Update***

- ***Reclamation projects are underway.***
- ***Debris removal and fencing.***
- ***Soil sampling is underway.***